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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000552

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: LARGE-SCALE COUNTER-TERROR OPERATION
TARGETS KURDISH POLITICIANS, ATTORNEYS, AND BUSINESSMEN

Classified By: Acting Pol Counselor Christopher Krafft for reasons 1.4(b,d)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Police reportedly arrested upwards of 70 people nationwide April 14 in a synchronized operation targeting the terrorist PKK and those that support it. The operation was launched against offices of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) in 14 different provinces, as well as against a private Diyarbakir-based television station, Gun-TV. Among those arrested were three DTP national deputy chairs, a number of provincial DTP officials, at least one attorney who represents jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, the chief editor of Gun-TV, and a number of businesspersons. Media reports quote government officials indicating the operation was one year in the making, with the aim of exposing those with explicit links to the PKK, especially within DTP. DTP continues to face a constitutional court case calling for its closure because of links between it and the outlawed PKK. DTP officials and supporters claim the raids were the ruling Justice and Development Party's (AKP) revenge for DTP's success in March 29 local elections throughout the country's Southeast and accuse the GOT of sabotaging the potential for peace on the heels of the PKK's latest announcement of a unilateral "cease fire." END SUMMARY

12. (C) The orchestrated raids on DTP offices took place early in the morning April 14 in 14 provinces (Diyarbakir, Batman, Mardin, Gaziantep, Sanliurfa, Sirnak, Elazig, Hakkari, Van, and Bingol in the Southeast, along with Adana, Ankara, Istanbul, and Aydin on the Aegean coast). Zeynel Bagir in DTP's Diyarbakir office told us party officials had identified thus far at least 70 detainees, but believes others have been detained but not yet identified. Some press accounts claim only 50 or so were arrested. National Deputy Chairmen Bayram Altun and Kamuran Yuksek were arrested in Diyarbakir, while Deputy Chairwoman Selma Irmak was detained in Mardin. Bagir attributed the raids to DTP's success throughout the Southeast in March 29 local elections, saying Turkey's "establishment" has not yet absorbed nor accepted the DTP's renewed electoral strength among Kurdish voters.

13. (C) Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir told us the local private Kurdish broadcasting station, Gun-TV, had been raided and its chief editor, Ahmet Birsin, arrested. Gun-TV had been closed down for the past 12 days for broadcasting in contravention of laws banning certain election-related programming prior to the March 29 elections. Baydemir noted

the GAP Project's Municipalities Union and a guesthouse that belongs to the Diyarbakir Municipality were also among the sites raided. He intimated the possibility of a peace process being established between the Turkish state and the PKK following the terrorist group's March 29 proclamation of yet another "unilateral cease-fire," extended until June 1 in an April 13 statement, had been sabotaged. DTP party leader Ahmet Turk reiterated Bagir's claim, telling his parliamentary group during a meeting in Ankara that the operation was a clear indicator of the government's "intolerance" of the election result. DTP Co-chair Emine Ayna called the raids "very dangerous" and "politically motivated." A journalist who had spoken with Selahattin Demirtas, Deputy Chairman of DTP's parliamentary group, said Demirtas believed AKP is "hell-bent on revenge because of the election results," noting that the police are "clearly under AKP's control."

14. (C) COMMENT: Law enforcement authorities have yet to divulge specific information regarding the nature of the evidence uncovered linking those arrested to the PKK or terrorist activities and are not speaking publicly today about the arrests. We will continue to seek clarification. Whether the operation is purely a counter-terror effort, is linked to the constitutional court case on the party's closure that has been pending for nearly a year and a half, or is an attempt, as all DTP officials are now claiming, by AKP to exact revenge on the party for its revival in the Southeast at AKP's expense, what seems clear is ethnic Kurds in Turkey are beginning to lose hope that the post-election period might lead to increased outreach by the AKP-led government on reforms that would address their long-standing

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concerns related to culture, language, and economic and political rights. GOT actions in the coming weeks and months may revive those hopes, but it may become increasingly difficult to counter the perception among Kurds that AKP seeks to achieve through police raids what it could not do at the polls, i.e., diminish DTP's hold on a sizable proportion of Turkey's ethnic Kurdish electorate by systematically undercutting it.

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Jeffrey